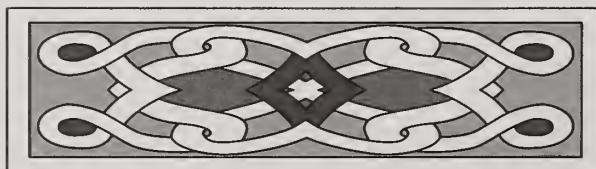




Parnassus

Spring 1997



In celebration of the life of
Allen Ginsberg
American Poet
1927-1997

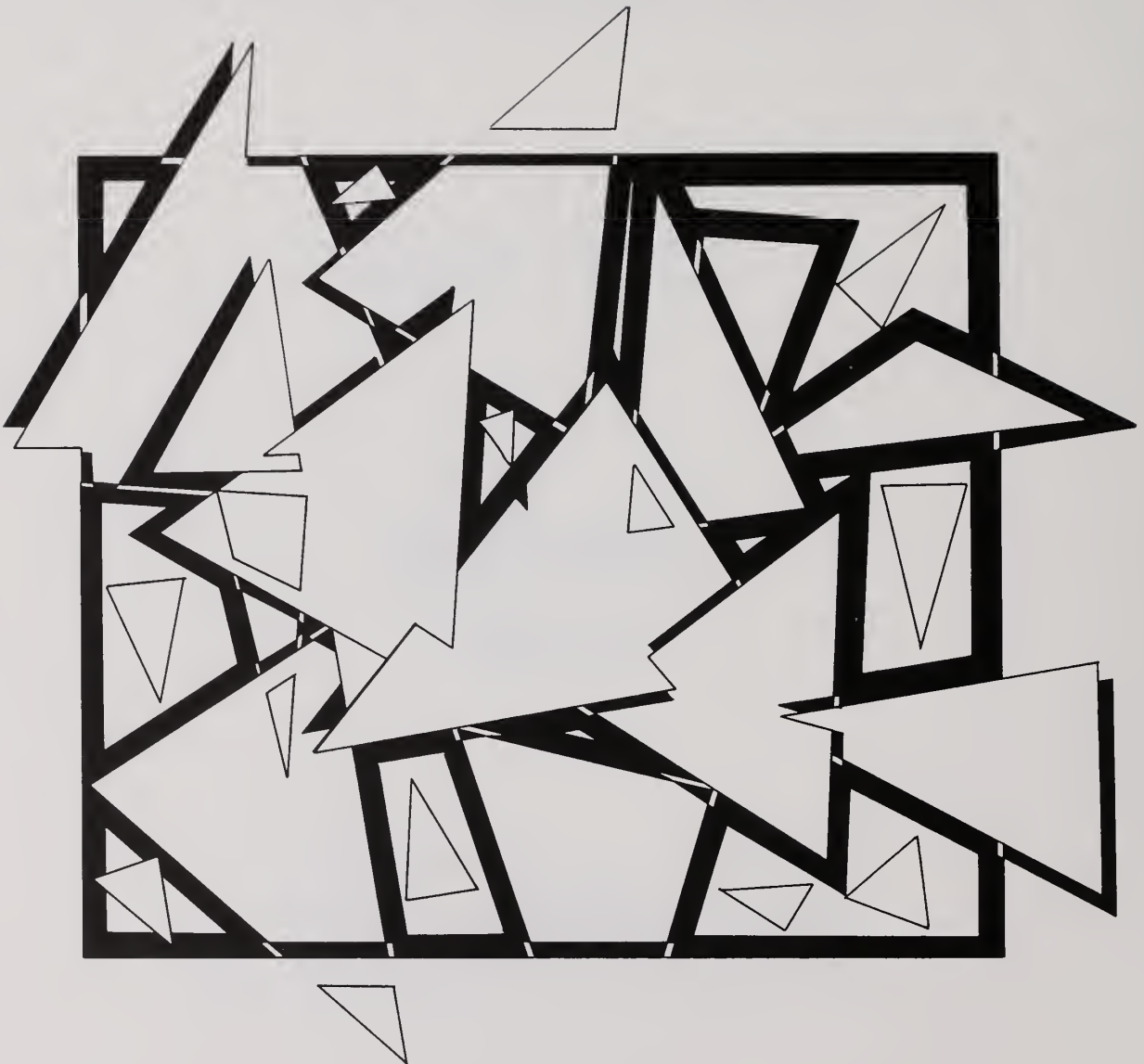
Parnassus

Inter-Arts Magazine
of
Northern Essex Community College
Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830

Spring
1997

Parnassus is the name of the mythological mountain home
of the nine muses who inspired humankind in the arts.

The policy of the editorial staff has been to select material for the magazine democratically. We have read each work submitted and viewed all artwork. We voted to determine eligibility: a majority vote for a piece meant publication. *Parnassus* provides an opportunity for new artists and writers to reach others; it's a showcase of Northern Essex Community College student creativity.



Favian Gonzalez

Parnassus

Spring 1997

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Perfidious Relations

Gordon House, Sussex

4 June 1873

My dearest Charlotte,
We are off to Manchester in the morning, love, and I did so want to drop a quick note in the post before leaving. Please do not worry yourself overmuch at our departure; knowing your concern for your good friend (as well as your worrisome nature and lively imagination) I am sure you should do exactly this were you to call Sunday and find us gone. Absconded without a word! I do hope you will put all your qualms to rest—just as I have. All is well, truly. Or nearly so; at least, I can say (and do not doubt my veracity here), I am feeling more like my former self than in previous weeks. I think I am becoming almost well. Sweet friend, my words speak from the heart.

It is all much due to John; he is a dear. He has been more patient with me than other husbands would have been. My illness and bad temper combined with relentless suspicions have not met with criticism; instead, I am rewarded with kindness and calm. If he admonishes me, it is with only the gentlest of smiles or a loving voice. And now, this wonderful, wonderful surprise! He has made arrangements for the lease of a summer house, the very one where we met five years back! He has somehow managed to keep this delicious secret from me until just last night! All my things have been carefully packed. Each trunk sits waiting in the hall. Rebecca, his sister, is to take charge of Gordon House while we are gone. John, as is his way, has left nothing to chance. There is naught for me to concern my head with. All of them, my sweet husband, dear Rebecca, and even Cousin Blyse, the good doctor, have thought out all the particulars of this holiday! (You know...I did observe more than the usual activity going on about the house of late and wondered to myself as to what might be the cause of the quiet commotion; for they have been all in twos and threes whispering together these last weeks. I should not think to mention it now, of course, not to them...but I had become somewhat discomfited by their actions and demeanor; for at my approach, all their conversations were immediately let off...and I felt so much the unwelcome intruder, ever seeming

to thrust myself into private matters to which I had not been invited. Well. Now it is clear...all of them...so good...contriving to ensure nothing went awry; we are to have our time at the ocean, John and I; oh, they do spoil me so, with this "mothering.")

Of course, John, believing I am a weak and fretful creature, thinking I embrace a female predilection for worrying about foolish details (do you sigh with me on this note, dear friend?) always wishes to spare me...unpleasantness... and trivial concerns. I think, too, both he and Cousin were afraid that the illness they call "hysteria," would again manifest itself were I burdened with many decisions. So here they are then...the family surreptitiously conspiring (almost like kind-spirited blackguards...what an oxymoron here, yes?) about a holiday to which I could not, in good conscience, say "no." With the quickness of it, there is no time to conjure up specters, obstacles, no time for my mind to give birth to nonsense which would prevent John and I going off. Oh Charlotte, you do see, do you not, the thread of goodness that runs through this family? You may say that they are in some ways hard or cold; but, in truth, I see and am grateful for the warmth of my relations. I will no longer allow the seeds of doubt to fester; I will not again question the sincerity of my John...or of those who clearly have only my well-being at heart. Be happy for us, please?

Ever Yr. loving,
Jenny

Manchester-by-the-Sea

5 Sunday June 1873

Charlotte dear,

We arrived in Manchester late yesterday afternoon after a wet, windy journey. The air became heavy as we approached the ocean and the sky had turned the color of cold pewter. All along the way the road twisted roughly; the muddy track was full of ruts and holes; we were fortunate not to become entrenched in the muck. But, as it was, the carriage bounced around considerably and after many cramped hours being thrown about,



Janice Morris



Justin Chase

we were sore and tired. I, for one, was extremely ill-tempered, complaining to John each time the coach lurched and tossed us into each other. As if it were his fault, poor man! But, he is of such sound, even temperament—he makes sense always, Charlotte. Gently, he begged forbearance... reminding me we would soon reach our destination and asking...what might one's complaining accomplish? As he says, one must look for some way in which to settle oneself comfortably—when caught in an uncomfortable arrangement.

Yes. He is right, of course, and so here we are at last, snug, safe and sound, prettily ensconced in our quite lovely cottage. (I will wander about the place through the coming days, investigating thoroughly; I wonder if much here has changed?)

It is a blessing John had the foresight to write ahead and have all in readiness; we were able to enjoy a good supper and every room had been opened. Clean briny air fills my bedroom and beautiful mauve roses, each with its long green prickly stem, have been placed all about in tall crystal jars. Their perfume in the boudoir is so heady one becomes intoxicated. And these flowers are almost the exact hue as those large showy petals spread across the ivory wallpaper. Ramblers, which seem quite alive, wind and twine around the room, seeming ready to leap out at me from the garden wall. The only thing is...I think of Rebecca here, how she would love to take her long pruning scissors inside a rosery such as this. What a horrid, strange thought!

It is now past dusk; we were fortunate to see the sun today, if just briefly; it made its appearance for one brilliant moment before dropping like a huge red gem from the crimson sky, disappearing into the dark blanket of night.

Oh Charlotte, I do feel somewhat better to have left the confining grey walls of Sussex behind for a bit. There, it seems, I could never find time alone to collect my own thoughts. One worrisome thing after another came into my path; Rebecca, for example, as decent as she is, so often interferes where she should not; she was always at my heels, wherever I went; each morning, you know, I walked in the garden and she would seek me out, engaging me in conversation. She was the talker, though; I mostly the captive listener; during these moments, she did give me much to reflect on. In truth, often

I'd have made my mind up on one matter or another and then suddenly my sister-in-law would be at my side, giving me another manner of seeing things...at times, I believe she has some sort of extraordinary power, that of not only seeing inside others but directing them to specific actions, opinions contrary to their own nature. Oh, I know it sounds quite ridiculous, don't listen to me, dear! I am simply tired.

But...John, she did say, is so very worried about my disturbed state of mind. And quite remorseful, too, feeling much to blame for those questions which have plagued me since last year. For the trouble that arose between us...you understand. Rebecca intimates, though, that I was more at fault...in some ways. (I believe she thinks me a wicked selfish creature, for she has said my "willfulness," my desire for independence, may have prompted her brother to become cold to me, even impelling him to act "improperly." She referred to his behavior as "unfortunate," even, "ungentlemanly." I raised my courage here, just once, saying that if her brother's "actions" were as I believed them to have been, then they deserved stronger language; I suggested that perhaps it might not be too harsh at all to say he had exhibited "unconscionable disregard for his spouse's feelings." My inner voice, that hurt, angry unforgiving part of my soul almost spoke the words, "unpardonable cruelty." But I let it rest, determining that to do so would serve no purpose—there would be little gain with such forthrightness. I would simply reveal myself as unchristian. Dear, old wounds must heal. They will only grow the worse with one's own salt poured into them.)

Rebecca was, I need tell you, quite taken aback with my "vehemence," as she called it; her round face grew red and blotchy, even (forgive me for speaking uncharitably here but tis the truth) "ugly." She was awfully nonplused. But, after a minute spent unruffling her considerably ruffled feathers, she did acknowledge that, well, it may have been the case, just once. But still...I should look to myself as to why the "difficulties" arose.

She said I should be glad of my position as John's wife. I should put the past and its errors behind. I need to stop being a "silly little goose," and cease living in a child's world, where nothing bad or painful ever happens. Rebecca also cautions me

about my "stubbornness." I have, she says, a singularly unnatural way of thinking, of behaving, at times; I seem to long for a freedom which is most "unladylike." My "rebelliousness" will only cause additional injury to myself and to her dear brother. I must (she says) endeavor to quell any desire for (what she sees as) "unfeminine independence." Rebecca says I should never lose sight of John's innate goodness and wisdom. He, of course, knows, better than anyone, what is best for those in his house. I should once again put my faith in him and remember my place as a dutiful wife. He may not be infallible but then only Christ, our Lord, was that. (Rebecca thinks, says quite a lot more; good friend—is it not often clear that siblings share not only the same parents, but similar natures as well?)

To look ahead, though; perhaps as a married couple we are now on the mend; John has promised that from here on he will allow me time to paint and write, although he thinks my "pretty pictures" and hours spent writing are a waste of time. I did ask for a small room of my own at Gordon House, a private place where I might set pen to paper; when we return home, John is to see about getting me a nook in the old servants' quarters in the attic. Of course, he would prefer all this (my "odd obsession with words," as he calls it) forgotten and would have me give more thought to domestic duties: giving and attending tea parties, calling each afternoon on other ladies of "our set" (his expression, you know it is not my own!)...I should concern myself with the managing of our homes, the staff...I should think only of beautiful dresses and other finery, think of grand balls...and...of course, work with Rebecca to create gardens which will be the envy of all John's peers. All the sort of activities I find so tedious... actually, (as you well know) I abhor them.

Oh, here I am complaining again...about him; and without cause...(this time?). In any case, here is my desire; John and I will spend the next two months in marital bliss; we will talk only of the future and put the past to rest; we will not speak of my former affliction either...and questions will all be laid aside. Any evidence of unhappy moments shall be buried forever. Oh, really, we are going to laugh again, to talk! We will walk through

the dark restful woods behind the cottage, on to the beach past the pines. I will play the sweet, cherry pianoforte in the parlour each evening and sing only for John as he sits in the brocade chair in the corner, enjoying his port and cigar. I will do as he says; I will try to eat properly, I will breathe in the fresh salt air.

For myself, I hope to grow strong enough that John will see he need not bring his foul-tasting medicines to my bedside. (I so despise the tonics he and his cousin espouse for one's health; oh, they think my nervousness will be much improved if I take the awful potions and powders hidden in my evening tea. Little does John suspect that I have discovered the cause of the bitter brew—nor does he know that, so noxious is the drink to my palate that I throw the awful liquid into the slops basin after he's gone.)

No, I am determined...to be of good cheer for surely brighter days lie ahead. The heat of summer is certain to warm our hearts, finally melting the last of the cold ice of winter. We will walk beside the beautiful cerulean sea and early each morning take the little skiff out upon the Essex River, the same sweet boat where John first proposed we spend the rest of our lives as one. I will pick the wild pink sea rose that grows by the cottage and thrill each morning at the sight of those pure white gulls sailing high above the rolling whitecaps. Oh Charlotte dear, perhaps soon I will even feel well enough to dance upon the waves!

I will find the peace that has so eluded me during the past year. With John. I am sure of it.

Affectionately yours,
Jenny

Manchester Cottage

26 July 1873

Dearest Charlotte,

I received your wonderful news, love! Yes, a thousand times yes, you are welcome, wanted here! Surely you know this without my saying. Dear friend (against your admonitions), I did tell John just as soon as the post arrived; I said that the two of you will be coming at the end of the fortnight. His reply was almost noncommittal... he left the room quickly, taking with him all those

letters and papers he's been so concerned with of late. It's not your coming, Charlotte, for I am sure he does think kindly of you...but...he is lately not himself; he is in a vile humour these past few days, saying little. I can't think why. The sea air is so invigorating. Days are hot and bright. We are removed from all sorts of worldly pressures that had contrived to make us miserable, each in our own way, you know, for so long...He has no business concerns to worry over; all was taken care of before we left Sussex.

I do think Rebecca writes to him daily. Long, long letters...about some matter of importance...although I would not for a moment think to ask about his private correspondence. I do inquire what are the goings on in Sussex and he says tersely that his sister is managing the house and staff with little difficulty; she has done some bit of entertaining with those (unlike ourselves) who have not the good fortune to be on holiday; all is well, and the gardens especially thrive under her care. Oh yes, Cousin Blyse comes by almost every day to Gordon House, making inquiry as to her (and our) health; she and he both wish me love and impatiently await our safe return at the close of the season. But...even with all this...I fear something is unsaid...amiss.

As for me, I have, these days, been at once both lonely and yet almost sinfully happy; it is difficult to explain, even to myself. I must say I am concerned with but not overwhelmed by John's confusing preoccupation. Of course, I would like to ascertain the cause of his worry. For, clearly, he is more than a bit distracted; however, you know how private a man he is. My fear, though, is that something immense is burdening him and he cannot (or will not, I know not which) talk about it. The past three mornings he has been rushing to the post. He takes each thick packet silently into the small library, shutting and locking the door behind him. He stays for hours alone, and then comes out, mumbling darkly that he is going to town for dinner; so he does, leaving cook and me to share supper and company. After she's put all together for the night, she returns to family in town and then I am truly alone. I do feel abandoned and lonely as the evening turns to night. Books and letters have become dearer friends than ever.

Maybe, love, when you come, John and I will have found ourselves again; perhaps he might even speak openly to your own Henry.

Dear, I am tired; I will leave off and finish in the morning...Oh, it is so good to think we will soon be sitting by the sea, sharing confidences as only the very best of friends may...

29 July

Charlotte,

Something has happened. Something monstrous. Frightening. Oh, Charlotte, I must write it all down quickly and get it to you as soon as I can safely do so. I am afraid. Afraid. And I feel ill.

Let me tell you how it was; I had just stopped writing my letters and taken a lovely book of poems to bed. A soft rain had been falling but it let up sometime around eleven. I heard the mantel clock chime. The air had turned cool, and the ocean breeze was filling the room. I had fallen asleep but the song of the heavy waves awakened me. Or perhaps it was something else. I rose from my bed, thinking to close the window. In the street, under the pale light of stars, two figures stood together. They embraced. I was afraid and curious at the same time, dear friend. I heard whispering but could make out but a few words. Once they looked up at my open window. I'm sure they could not see me but still I moved into the deep shadows of the room, away from the glass; instinctively I leaned into the protection of the rose wallpaper.

I went back under the bedclothes, heart pounding, dropping into a fitful sleep, consumed by woeful dreams and foreboding. An hour must have passed before I half-awoke, sensing someone in the room. Standing at the foot of the bed. My eyes were closed. Yet I knew it was him. He smelled like port and laudanum. He said not a word yet I was aware of his agitation. His silence, his presence, almost completely unnerved me but I kept still. Feigning sleep, I observed him under half-closed lids. The night had cleared and soft moonlight now filtered through the open window and the wind blew the thin rose-patterned curtains over and across his back. He seemed like a ghost or some dark angel come to take me heavenward, the way he stood with those lace wings about his shoulders.

He stood watching for perhaps ten terrible minutes. Impossible to be sure...he then moved closer and I thought I saw something hard and heavy held tight in his fist. He raised his hand slightly and I could hear his sharp intake of breath. I was near paralyzed with fear; a faint moan escaped my constricting throat and I thought, surely, this was to bring about my own last breath. But just then a loud Clang! rang through the night air as the wheel of an errant carriage struck the protruding roots of the ancient linden tree which stands close to our front door. The driver of the conveyance swore drunkenly as he jumped to the ground examining for damage. A horse whinnied in nervous irritation and the carriage-man cursed again as he set to calm the animal and right the wheel.

My nocturnal intruder stopped in his tracks, then turned and fled. Quickly he ran, almost without a sound, down the back stairs. He must not have worn shoes for his feet whispered only lightly on the carpeted treads. The back door shut with a barely perceptible thwump. Next I heard the crunch of stones on the dark road leading to the carriage house which sits at the edge of the woods. I waited a moment, then jumped up, tossing aside the bedclothes, stepping rapidly down the back stairs myself. Clad only in my cotton nightdress, my heart beating wildly beneath, I followed him into the night.

A small light glowed in the small glass panes set into the little round wooden building. He had gone inside and I crept forward, like a stealthy animal, close behind him. A shadow-like, midnight creature. Feline-woman, padding around in the dark on soft paws. Moving cautiously towards the orange tongue of flame. In the flickering amber, I could see, hear, both of them.

He was shaking his head, his long auburn hair falling in waves above his burgundy and gold cloak. Ah...together John and I chose that beautiful cloth for this fine garment just last year. I myself had given the tailor explicit instructions as to its cut. My heart ached as I watched, listened.

"It's not done. There was some interruption. I will go back soon and see it through."

The woman, very young and extraordinarily beautiful, sat at a rude wooden table, rocking back and forth and rubbing her hands worriedly. Her features were known to me. Violet. My cousin. Twice-removed. The troubled, desperate girl who

had come to stay with us a year before. Violet. As I witnessed this scene, I think she should have been called Circe. Violet. My husband's paramour. Charlotte, you remember...so many of our problems began with her coming, didn't they? I thought they had ended, though, when Dr. Blyse, ever John's faithful cousin, found a place for our Violet...removing the girl and her...difficulty from our lives.

"John, we mustn't do this; it's evil upon evil. Oh...poor, poor Jenny...how can I do this awful thing to you? Please, love, let us simply go away. We will be happy, we need only each other and..."

His voice was raw.

"Be quiet, damn you; we've come this far. We're halfway done...or have you forgotten your desire for the manor, the land? All of it mine... do you forget? Yours as well. Here I've committed all these sins...for you. And so, how do you think we, either of us, might give it up? As for Jenny...were you so concerned a year back? Violet, we're not the worst of the lot, you know... After all, what about...Rebecca? And him? Weren't they as bad—with their own perfidy? No matter how one sees it...a pall of misery has descended on this house. And Jenny, from the onset, was doomed."

His eyes were cold and a wicked sneer turned his beautiful mouth ugly.

"Dear Violet. Think. Would you have us swing together, dropping like stones from the gallows? I rather doubt it."

She shuddered, beginning to weep and shake like a young green willow caught in a wild summer storm.

John slapped her once, hard across the mouth.

"Be quiet; your part was easy. Breaking up the skiff in the river...on those rocks by the jetty, now what did that cost you? And now, it's all nearly over, for you at least. Don't fret; your lovely white hands won't be too dirtied again tonight. Although, with the other acts of this little play, the threats, blackmail...those hemp burns scarring your pretty palms, I can't see what might be the difference. In any case, I will manage Jenny myself...carefully, though; the bitch is stronger than she appears. As for you, you just wait by the cistern again and help with the cover after."

Before Violet could respond, a loud wail split the night. A baby's cry. Cousin ran to the crib across the room, picking up the child as John

swore, "Jesus, she'll hear; shut the little bastard up, will you? Or would you rather he drop too?" He grabbed a hammer lying on the table, flung wide the door and fled from the crying woman and her babe. Ignorant of my quivering body hidden behind the door, he hurried away to the main house.

Charlotte, I ran from the carriage building, away from the cottage, into the dark woods, towards the ocean beyond, flying along the beach. Running as fast and as hard as ever I'd run before. Quite possibly my toes never touched the sand; wings seem to have sprouted on my heels. Finally, I reached the edge of town and found this place to hide within, a place to write to you, dear one. A place to wait. I have been here three days now. Tired, hungry, unwashed. Disheveled and distraught as I am, I must appear wild. It does not matter.

Listen. Please. The same scruffy-looking child who brought me bread, water...pen and paper... and who will post this, will look for your coach at the crossroads as you enter town...the main road by the sea is the one you must follow. Pay the boy what he asks. I have promised. I only pray John doesn't find him; the urchin's loyalty is all to the shilling. I know this. Oh Charlotte, please...Come quickly. He will be looking everywhere. Meaning to remove me, he will say I am the one who has done murder and thrown my husband down into the well. And who will believe otherwise? He is respected, after all. As my physician...John Blyse will certainly tell the world, and quite rightly now, that I am mad again.

Hurry.

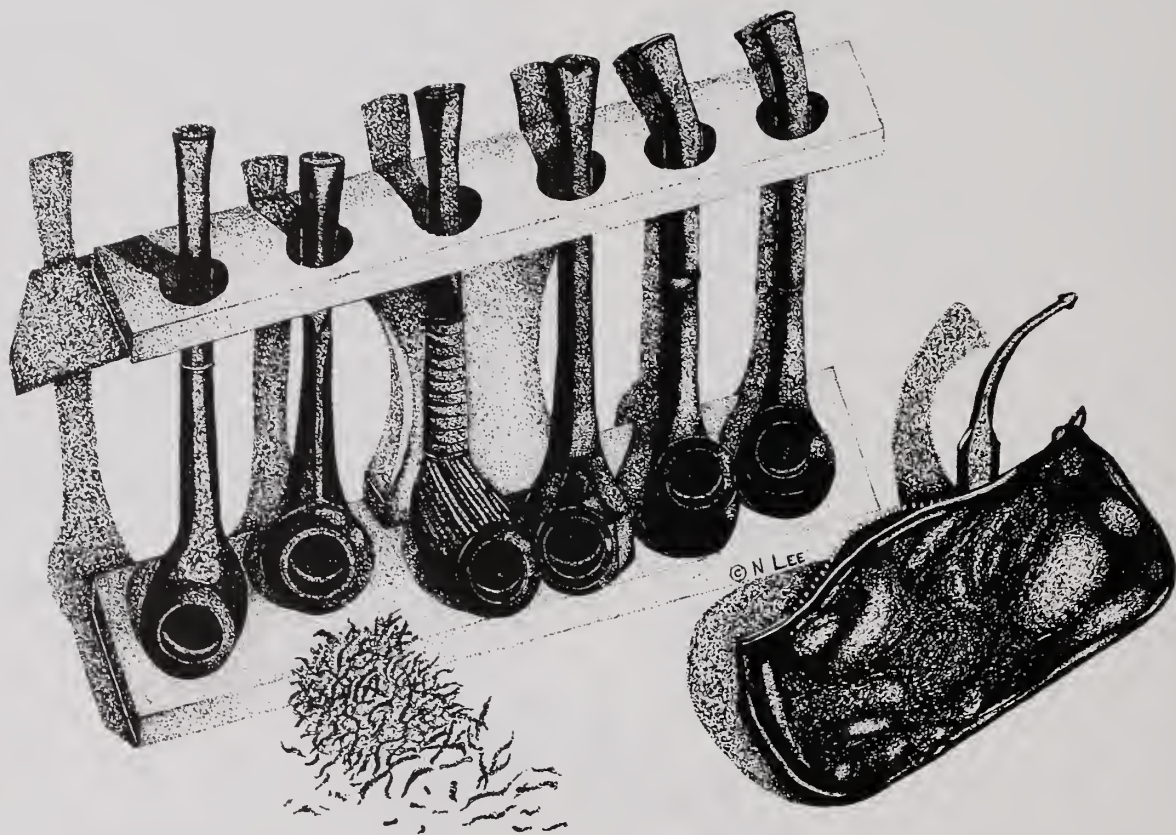
Your own—loving,
J.

mj wagner

*With Appreciation to Charlotte Perkins Gilman...
And to All the Other "Mad Women"
Too Long Hidden in the Attic*



Betty Bastarache



Norman A. Lee

Two poems by Jessica Lattime

Shadow

In spite of the feelings,
I'll put them aside.
Once stripped of all dignity,
I will cling to my pride.
You have become consistent,
To my personal demise.
Consuming my thoughts,
Like a whirl-wind inside.
In nurturing you,
The rest of me has died,
Now all that is left,
Is this silhouette at your side.

Demon Lover

Out of the shadows he comes to me by night,
His deep black eyes soothe my instinct of fright.
I leave hand in hand with my sinister mate,
He whispers to me that blood is my fate.
His mesmerizing grip yields total control,
My yearning for him gives him my soul.
Dark lovers are we, eternity we share;
Surrounded by flames our bodies burn bare;
Into my neck his tremendous fangs break,
Spinning my thoughts a trance I can't wake.
Throbbing my body my veins grow weak,
My consciousness swirls and the fire dims bleak.
Together as one we touch death by the hand,
He crushes me to him we fall onto the sand.
Quenched the sensation of my pounding heart,
We lie still together, lovers of the dark.



Seamus Heffernan

Unattainable Dream

I sit alone and stare into the light;
I could sit and stare for hours and hours on end.
I gaze into her eyes—wondering, longing, dreaming.
Intoxicated in beautiful waves of orangy-red.

Lust. Forever utilized in my fantasies until today.
Learning her struggles, goals and hopes I no longer lust but love.
Love, but I still sit alone—hoping, praying, dreaming.
Lonely I stare into this illumination, wishing it mine.

Oh, how I wish to spend my life in her light.
Oh, how I wish she could somehow contemplate my thoughts and feelings.
Open to disaster, I sit alone and stare—pining, wishing, dreaming.
One obstacle hanging on the wall for all to see, stifling my dream.

Vacant was my heart until I met her, but in her beautiful eyes I am no lover, rather an ogre.
Venus has no desire for the hunchback, beast or elephant man.
Vultures circle as I sit alone—thinking, crying, dreaming.
Vulnerable to abuse I hide my feelings, acting in a friendly manner yet dreaming of more.

Energized by possibility, reality slaps me across the face.
Enslaved by orangy-red waves, my dream goes too far.
Entertained by a smile, I sit and stare—pondering, pretending, dreaming.
Enchanted by brilliance, her brain adds intellectual beauty to God's perfect creation.

Adventurous nature. A childlike happiness, playful and cheery.
Amiable personality, what's not to love.
Alone I sit staring into the light—fantasizing, envisioning, dreaming.
Ambitious nature, I continue striving toward my goal unprepared to fall.

Jousting dreams and reality fight for love.
Journey from hell to heaven at first sight.
Jubilant eyes into which I look—gazing, staring, dreaming.
Just one quick glimpse into her light and I was hooked.

Another dream, another unattainable dream.

Into the night I stare, looking at the twinkling stars which can't compete with her eyes.
Longing to show my love, I sit alone and quiet just staring.
Oh, how loneliness has taken over my soul—devouring, rotting, dreaming.
Violently reality strikes my dream dead.
Ending thoughts of us, two as one.
Another dream?
Just not possible in my heart, there is but only one.

Another dream, another unattainable dream.

George R. Scione



Kevin Bacon

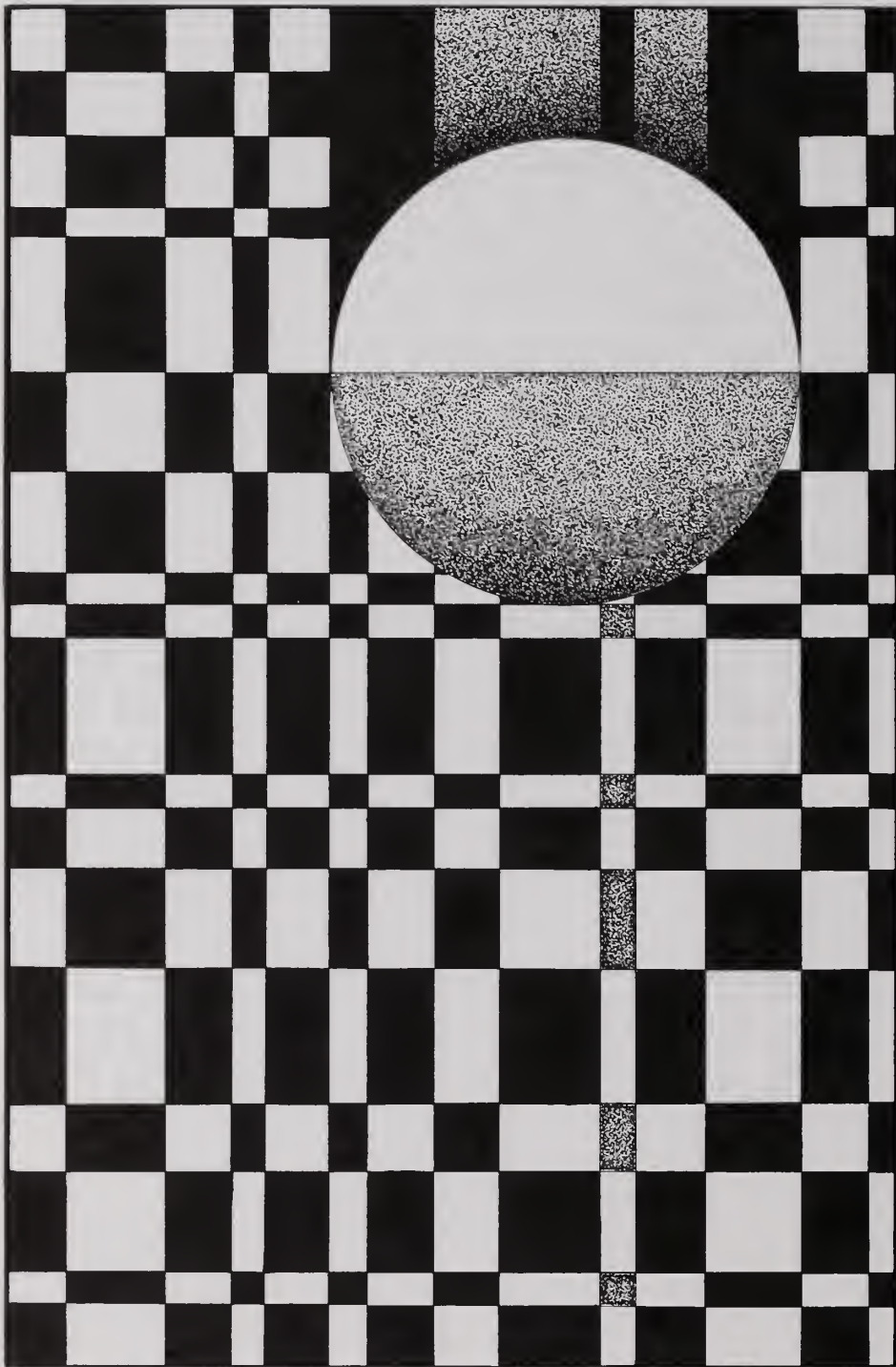
Two poems by Joshua R. Davidson

Love Madness

Love is madness weeping willows.
Consuming, blinding and enchanting,
We dance around it.
Brewing our minds,
Fluttering hummingbirds sampling nectars.
Left in a lingering fatalistic stagger.
Fervid enticing, How sweet is its essence?
Embellished memories exhausted,
You must let go...with a kiss.
I cried over its sadness.

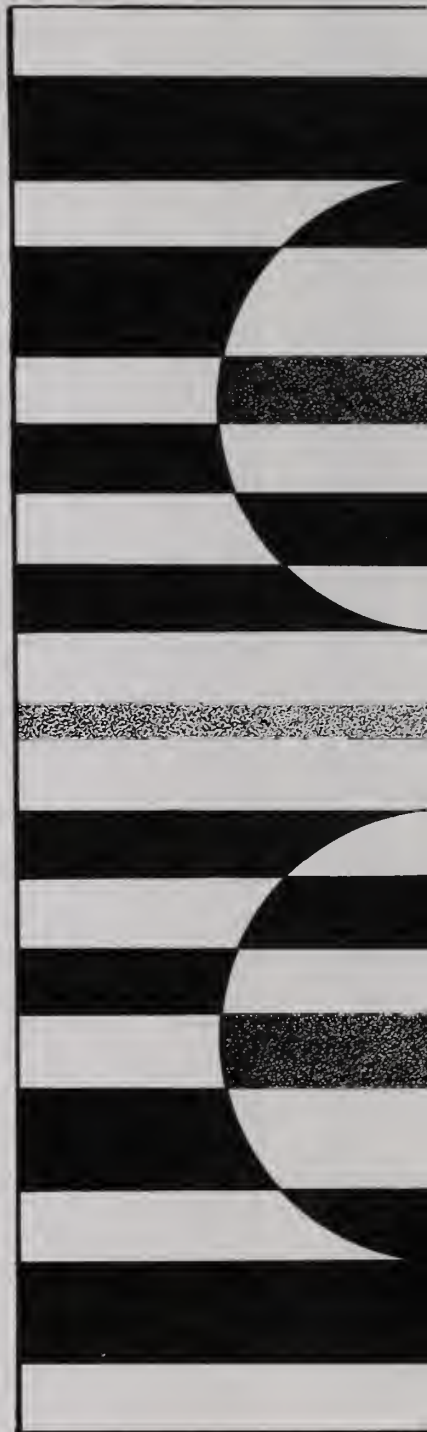
Gusting Illness

A moment frozen in time's chamber,
Innocently lost in your eyes.
Tend to comforting friction,
Warm breaths released from their dungeons.
Penetrating sounds of stillness,
Time flows into endless shadows.
Cries of life and misting new days,
Searching for sanctuary.
Tandem cycles collapse,
A revealed closeness.
Peering over deep valleys,
The seas are absorbed.
Reach beyond reason.

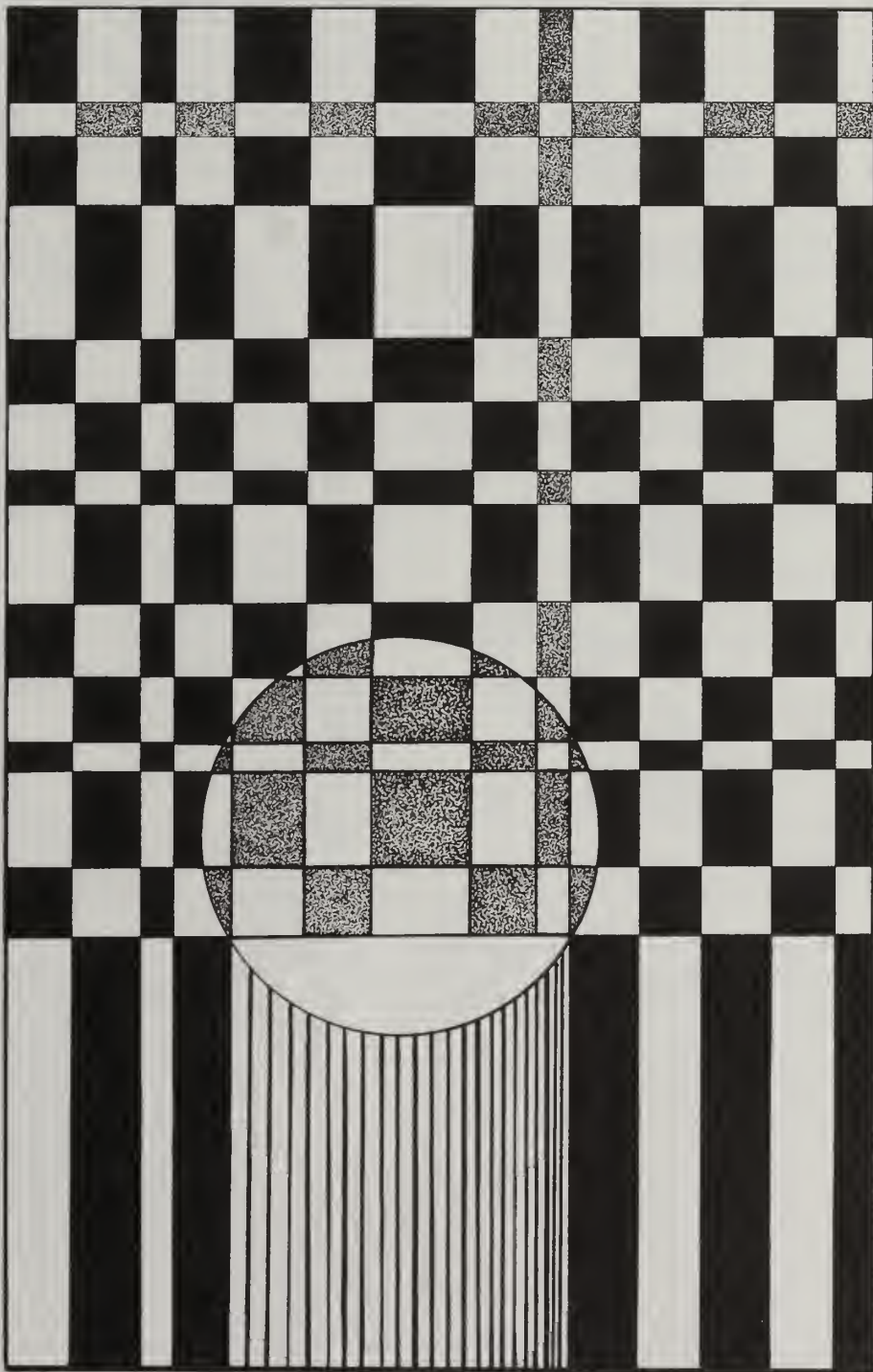
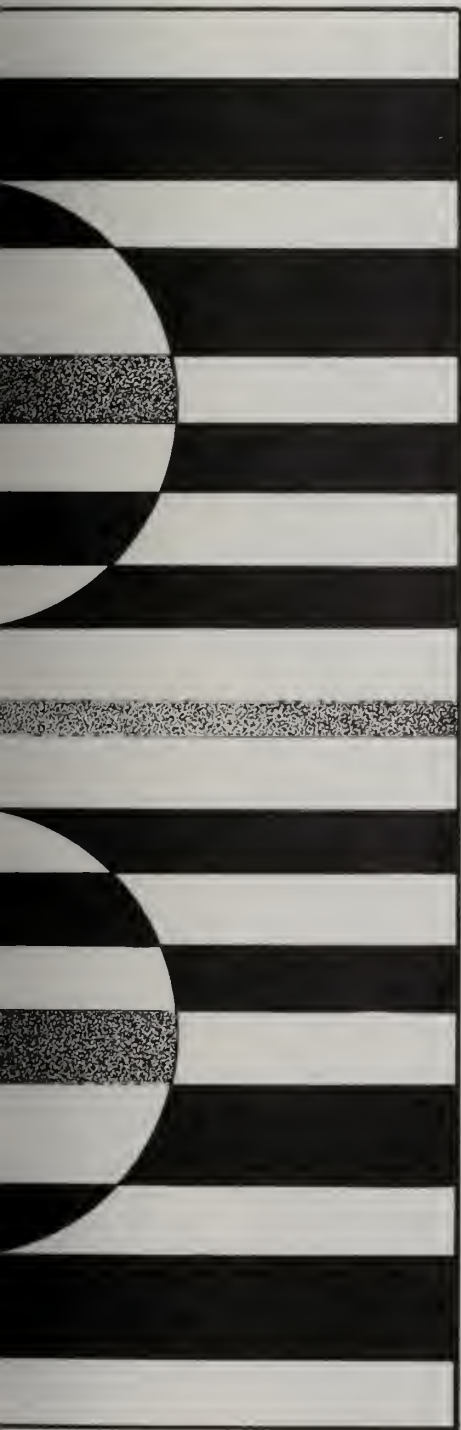


Lisa Finnegan

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Parnassus



Two poems by mj wagner

How I Came To Die

The grey
Thin voice of the last day
Whispered *Life's a sham*.

The blue
Lost face of the woman
Stared right through my eyes.

The deep
Sweet hymn of the sailor
Beckoned from the sea.

The brown
Glass rim of the bottle
Found my waiting lips.

The gold
Leafed heart of the chalice
Caught me with its kiss.

The red
Edged tip of the arrow
Pierced me with its blood.

The dark
Old song of our winter
Sank into my dream.

The green
Young lord of the hemlock
Drew me to the wood.

The white
Cold snow on the hilltop
Begged me stay the night.

The keen
Wild cry of the piper
Sang with love...my name.

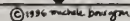
neko no koi*

On a barren branch
cotton-tongued hazel-eyed cats
lie sweetly, mewling.

**(neko no koi: cats in love, love-making of...)*



Monica Cross



21



Manny Aguiler

Junky

My name is Jim. I'm sixteen and this isn't my story. I was on the bus last week. Sometimes you meet people on the bus, and I met her. I don't know who she was or where she was going. I don't think she knew either. I don't expect ever to see her again.

This story is hers. I've tried to write it in her words. Not exactly her words, because I can't remember them, but in her voice. I tried to capture her on these pages because I don't think she is going to survive.

Here is my story. It's just mine. I'm not wearing my mask now. We all wear masks every day. When you ride this bus, or walk down the hall, and you see people, that's not really them you're seeing. It's Cover Girl lipstick and *Seventeen* magazine and advice columns and polite smiles for only the right people.

I'm just me now. If they saw me, they'd see just me, because I'm done fighting and scrapping and hiding to stay alive. I've given it up. I'm done living in this war zone they call adolescence, and I'm done wearing masks. They won't see me though, because I'm not going back. I won't walk in their halls again. I'm gone for good.

Even if they saw me, they wouldn't recognize me. My masks are good. No one's ever seen me before. And I don't look like I used to. I look like a junky now. My hair and nails and mouth are painted black and brittle. They're dry and cracking, and breaking apart.

I've lost all my colors. My skin is chalky white where it used to be gold. Sharp gray shadows lurk under my eyes. Even my eyes are draining of color, turning pale gray.

My body has become colorless, a thin white ghost. My long black hair and clothes hang loosely on her.

She's growing thin in strange places. Sharp bones poke out at the translucent skin covering her wrists and the bottom of her ribcage. She's so thin smoky bruises spread on her skin where the bones have pressed too hard.

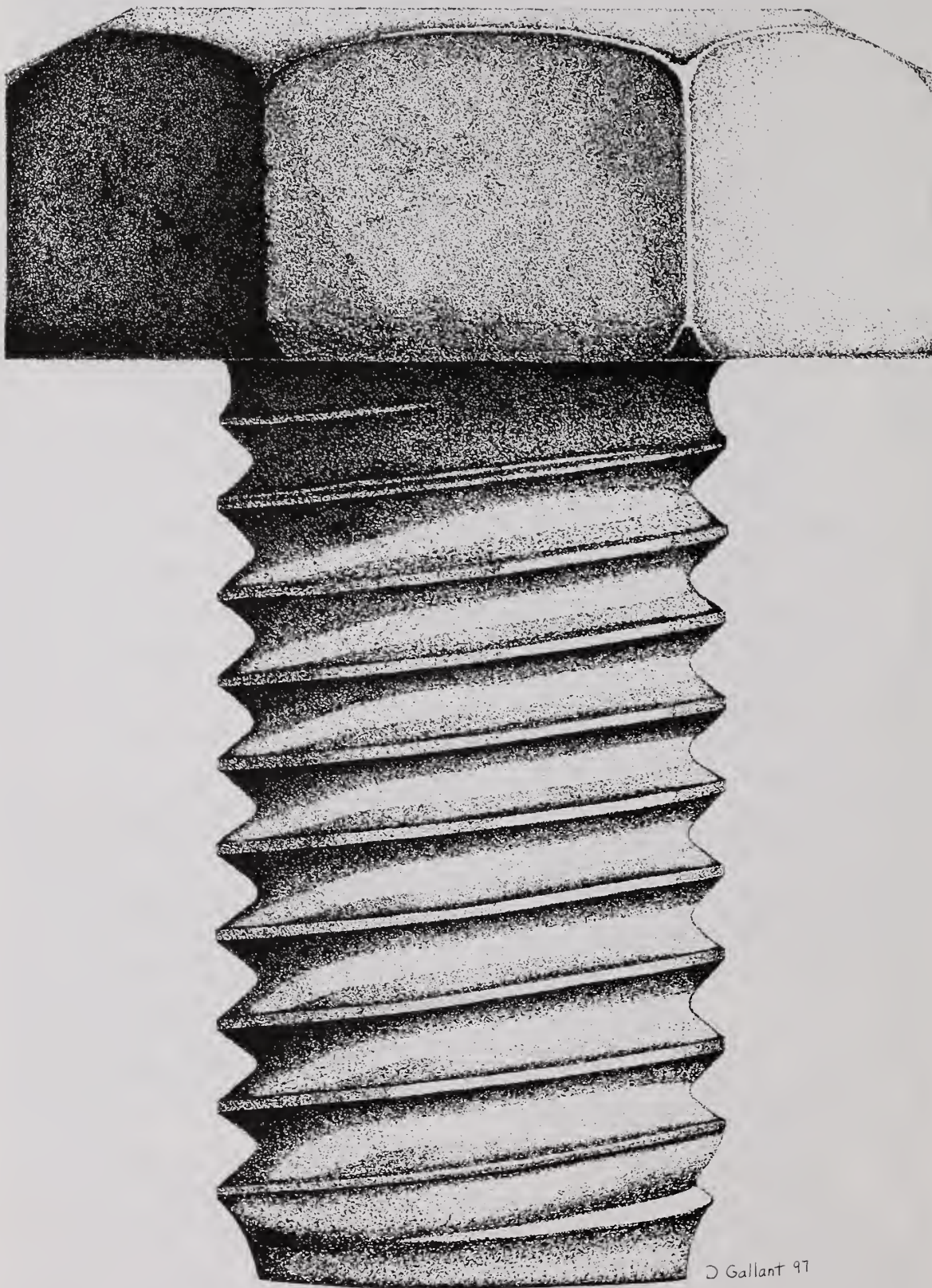
There are bruises, too, inside the elbow, track lines cradled like babies in the crook of her arm.

My body, she feels like a junky. Her muscles ache horribly from the inside. In her abdomen, even up under her ribs, she feels hollowed out, as if someone had come in with a scraping tool and taken everything away. Hollow feeling, and also stretched and burning inside, the feeling of a junky heart.

I'm becoming a junky in other ways, too. I move constantly, shifting my feet in shadows, smoking with shaking fingers and white lips. I stand in cold alleyways waiting for nothing. I sleep whenever I can but don't rest. I can't eat at all.

I try to write but instead I dream. Sometimes I don't even dream but just stand smoking in the night watching fragments of cigarette ash float down to faded gray bricks the way as a child I watched maple seeds spiral through sunlight in my backyard.

Sierra Black



© Gallant 97

Diane Gallant

My Name Is Plain Jane

People look at me in a moment's glance
I'm not tall or short but stand an average height
I walk a slow, rugged pace
My clothes are homely, color to me has no meaning
My name is Jane: boring, echoless, plain Jane

At seventeen, my body remains underdeveloped
My complexion gives my face stern expression
And the acne is scarring it more
I hate my shit brown eyes, too dark for even a boy's reflection
My ebony hair with its thin texture is always in them
But I know I will never change, I will evermore endure my suffering
As Jane: boring, echoless, plain Jane

My innocence was lost at a young age
Inside a basement with laughter from a party up above
He said he liked me a lot so I believed him
I let him do what he wanted, then wiped my tears from the pain
I remember rarely what happened when it was over, except lyrics from a song being played
Some song by Nirvana, I think
But I don't listen to music anymore when I sleep with boys
Because I am Jane: boring, echoless, plain Jane

I see the world as an illusion
Poverty, racism, disease, murder, and the rest revolving in one little planet
I think life is a curse sent from God
He punishes me because I'm bad
But I'm His displeasing, hideous creation
Just another thorn in His crown
I am Jane you see: boring, echoless, plain Jane

I possess the talent to sketch these illusions with lead in my left hand
I only draw my perception of things
Art is all that matters in my world
My teacher encourages my passion for all to see
I won a contest once for drawing a popcorn kernel
Mother and Father believe I should attend a special school
But I hate delightful colors
And I hate everyone's opinion
For I will never look lovely and fair
I shall never develop extensively
Or listen to music when I sleep with boys
And I will never feel the unconditional love God has for me
Because I will always, everlasting, and infinitely
Be Jane: boring, echoless, plain Jane

Holly Weldon

The Bus Ride

She lifted her head from the glass. Shook from the cold. No conversation on the trip so far. He didn't appear to want one. What do you say to a cop anyway?

He stared ahead. Finish this in a couple of hours, deliver her, and then some quality time with the kids. He adjusted his position and stretched out his legs.

"Is that better?"

"Huh?"

"Are you comfortable now?"

"It's a friggin' bus. Comfort ain't available."

"Well, aren't you Mr. Sunshine. I thought that..."

"Go back to thinking and leave me alone."

"Asshole."

His eyes widened and he smiled. He always enjoyed irritating people.

"I'm here to watch your ass, so pissing me off is probably not a good idea."

She leaned back against the window and let out all the air in her lungs.

"So how is it?"

"How's what?"

"My ass. You're supposed to be watching it."

She turned in time to catch him smiling.

"You're not going to give up...are you?"

"Look, I've got twelve weeks in the middle of nowhere ahead of me. After that I'll be looking over my shoulder for the rest of my life. All I'm looking for now is some words to cover the wounds."

"All right. You ask, I'll answer."

"Isn't that kind of arrogant of you? Why don't we share?"

"If you're trying to get your mind off your troubles, talking about them isn't the best way."

"Good point. How long have you been a cop?"

"Detective. Five years."

"How long till we get to the middle of nowhere?"

"About fifteen minutes."

"Are you married? Kids?"

"No. Yes."

"Do you know any witnesses in the program who have been killed?"

"That's not gonna take your mind off it."

"I ask, you answer."

The high pitched screech of the bus brakes brought momentary silence.

"Fifteen minutes?"

"Okay, maybe a little less. Get your luggage and stay behind me. Do as I say, no questions."

"I'm shaking."

"It's just the cold."

"This chill's on the inside."

They got off the bus, and walked to the deserted gas station across the street. He looked around. No one else got off the bus, no cars around either. She sat on the bench and he sat next to her.

"Well? What was the answer to my question?"

"Which question?"

"Have you ever known any witnesses in the program that got killed?"

"Only one."

She heard the blast, but never knew what it was.

Marc Carey



Monica Cross

Out the Attic Window

I went to her funeral today. Didn't go in, just stood outside the cemetery. Just a passerby, a lone man, early thirties, so disheveled anyone might have thought me homeless or mad. I loitered there, both hands resting on the low iron fence. Watching. Watching all those people, gathered in dull black, huddled close together, their bodies visibly mourning the dead woman being lowered to the earth under the monotone of prayer.

I wanted to go to the wake, to see her one last time, up close and personal at last. But how could I? How could I have explained to all those grieving strangers who I was, why I'd come? How could I explain it to them, when I couldn't even explain it to myself?

I first saw her a few months ago. About a week after we moved in. My wife Kristen and I, I mean. It was late, past midnight. The wet heat woke me abruptly, pulled me from our bed. Following the cool trail of a faint summer breeze, I moved through the darkened rooms groping with cautious fingertips from one pale silver strip of moonlight to the next. I was exploring my own house, trying to discover my home, walking the halls naked in the humid darkness.

I remember climbing the steps, feeling restless heat push at my legs, while I paid no attention, lost in my own dreamlike thoughts. The attic in this house is big, and at the time it was empty. The moonlight added the illusion of height, of sweeping ceilings and endless walls that stretched into soft gray shadows at the back of the room.

I turned aimlessly for a moment, then found my way to the wide curved window. I stood looking out, hands resting on the wooden window frame. It's a low window, starting just a foot off the floor, stretching up near the ceiling.

On this night I stood in the attic window, feeling the coolness of the glass radiate against my naked skin. Looking out I saw the city in strange light, seeming small and gray and far away.

My eyes were startled by a sudden bright light, level with my window. And here, in the split second it took my head to move, I committed the one action I regret most in life.

I looked up. I looked up into the window that matched mine, facing it across the alley. I looked up into that window, and into the bedroom behind it. Into the bedroom, and right at the girl whose long fingers had flicked the light switch, grabbing my attention.

She was...beautiful is the word that comes to mind, but right away, that first night, there was something about her that was alluring beyond beauty. She made beauty unimportant, sucked the meaning right out of it. She wasn't beautiful, she was a dream. Yes, dreamlike, that describes her perfectly.

She was standing alone in a pool of golden lamplight. The light was playing in her honey blond hair, lighting up the soft waves that framed her face.

Her face was lovely, like a model's, that matte perfection. She had large wide eyes, whose color I couldn't make out in that light. They were placed evenly around a long, fine nose, small and falling just short of childlike cuteness.

Then there was her mouth. Red lips, full and turned out like an angel's pout. She was smiling to herself, and the soft curve of those lips made me wonder how they would feel on my body, wrapped around the erection beginning to rise between my legs. It was so enticing it hurt to think about it.

She wore a tight black dress, fitted to her curves. I could see the line of her bra pressing the fabric, and under that the tiny points of her nipples. Her shoulders were bare, showing delicate collarbones and the slender line of her neck.

I gasped when I saw her, and quickly looked down. Then back up. I stared at her, feelings my prick swell and harden.

She turned to focus on the window and I dropped quickly into shadow, off to the side. I was terrified she'd see me. My heart pumped fear.

I quickly realized that she hadn't. She was just looking out the window, much as I'd been doing before she turned her light on, before I'd been able to see her.

I realized then that she couldn't see me, would never know I was there. It gave me this strange perverse feeling of power, knowing that I could watch her like this, with impunity, use her window like a movie screen. The knowledge made me bold, and I stepped forward, into the swath of moonlight. I knelt against the casement, so close my erect penis nearly touched the cool glass.

She'd returned to the center of the room. She was looking to the right, apparently watching herself in a mirror I couldn't see. Then she started to undress. It was like a fourteen year old's wet dream. She did it real slowly, slipping the dress



Colin Tierney



Jenny Saba

down over her incredible hips to reveal a black lace bra and panties. I watched her undress hungrily, masturbating alone in the darkness.

She stretched her hand up to the light switch then, dropping darkness down abruptly, like turning off a television set.

I was suddenly struck by the grotesqueness of the situation. Here I was, an adult man, happily married to a beautiful woman, and I was kneeling by a stranger's bedroom window as if it were an altar. Disgusted, I returned downstairs, crawling into bed beside my sleeping wife, pressing myself against her warm body for comfort.

The next morning I awoke to a scene of bright sunlight, Kristen singing softly to herself as she moved around the room, a fresh cup of coffee already in her hand.

In the daylight it was hard to believe that last night had been real. Perhaps it wasn't, perhaps I'd dreamed the whole thing. Of course I had, no real woman could look like that. Besides, I'm not a spy or a peeping Tom. I would never do something as disgusting as spy on a woman in her own bedroom and get off on watching. Would I? Or was it just that I'd never had the chance?

A dream then, and nothing more.

And then Kristen spoke.

"Where did you go last night, love? I woke up and you were gone. I called for you and waited a few minutes, but you didn't come. What happened?"

I rose from the bed and took her thin body in my arms.

"Nothing, baby, nothing. I just couldn't sleep, so I decided to get up and walk around. The house is beautiful by moonlight, especially the attic," I murmured into her hair.

I stood there holding her, feeling her bones press me through her nightgown, silently feeling like shit, like the worst hypocrite, holding my wife while my mind wandered across the alley beside the house to hold another, very different woman.

Very different. Kristen is wonderful, but she's not sexy. Not like the girl last night. Her skin is white, not honey, with a spray of dark freckles the color of her deep brown hair. Kristen is terribly thin, nearly as tall as I and only one hundred and fifteen pounds. She has almost no breasts, no curve to her hips, no soft lines in her silhouette. At times,

especially when she's painting, Kristen carries herself like a man, with the same strong, wide legged posture, whether sitting or standing. Intellectually, I love this. Her economical body, her internal strength and androgyny, all add to making her the woman I love and want to spend my life with.

Intellectually. Physically it's quite a different story. As attractive as her body is to my ideals, as much as my mind adores and respects her, my private lusts and fantasies all revolve around her opposites. Women like the girl in the window, flawless physical beauties without a voice or a mind who need nothing and want nothing but emotionless sex. Of course in real life this would never be enough for me, but I couldn't help making the comparison, that morning, between my strong, skinny wife, and the soulless beauty across from my attic window.

I tried to forget her.

I went to work, buried myself in extra projects. At home I made love to Kristen, admired her new paintings, took her out to dinner. Made love again. Made love all the time, each time trying and failing to forget, to erase from my fevered dreamy thoughts the imagined feel of silken thighs and large soft breasts under my fingers. I tried to drown myself in Kristen, in our new home, in her paintings.

But eventually I came back up for air.

It burned at me like a need for food, the desire to climb back up those stairs. And after two weeks I found my sleepless feet softly pressing on each wooden step leading to the attic.

When I got there, her window was dark. Nothing. I waited most of two hours, holding my breath in a tense mixture of relief and disappointment. Finally I went back down, lying depressed and confused beside Kristen's heat, trying to believe I was glad she hadn't been there.

But of course, I'd already given up the fight. The next night I was there again, climbing those same stairs. At the top I stared out my same wide window, into her dark one. Saw nothing.

I told myself I was giving up, that I didn't care anymore, that I had Kristen and she was more than enough, everything I'd ever wanted a woman to be. Half of me believed it was true. But the other half climbed back up to the attic that third night.

The light was on when I got there. There were three women in the room. Two of them I have forgotten entirely, but the third one was her. She was lounging carelessly on the bed, wearing a short silk and lace nightie, like the ones on display in Victoria's Secret, where Kristen never shops. Her legs were slightly parted, revealing soft gray shadows between.

In my mind I was kneeling on the bed before her, gently kissing the golden curves just above her knee, feeling the velvet skin on my face. Kristen never shaves her legs, and while I'd be the last person to ask her to, the thought of this girl's smooth shaven, honey-tan thigh touching my cheek was almost painfully arousing.

Eventually her friends left, and she turned out the lights, shutting herself off from my eyes. But I stayed there, masturbating to the memory, until I came against the glass between us. Guiltily I mopped it up, then crawled back down to Kristen, feeling low and dirty.

The next morning I glared at myself in the mirror, spitting out self-disgust with my used toothpaste. The girl was really real, and what I had done last night was really wrong, by every standard of decency I could think of. It was low, dishonest, probably illegal, and worst of all, a betrayal of my wife. I would never do it again.

So I truly believed at the time. Actually I would do it again, over and over again. There was always the hatred, the self-loathing in the morning, but I couldn't stop. I was like a junky, or a closet gay, sneaking away to my sordid secret world in the early hours when Kristen slept ignorant in our bed.

Every time I swore I'd stop, and at the beginning I could manage to stay away for a few days at a time, but the more I saw her, the more I needed to kneel at that attic shrine, seeing my fantasies played out across the alley.

Very soon I felt compelled to make the journey to the attic nightly. I couldn't sleep without first trying for a glimpse of my anonymous dream-girl. Nights when she didn't appear I would be depressed, restless and moody the next day, and the next until I could see her again. When she didn't come it was torment. But, oh, those nights when she did!

She had a lover, a young man who appeared sometimes, eagerly pulling her clothes away from that luscious body, sucking her into his arms, touching her everywhere my imagination had carried me. It was incredible, the sense of power, as I watched these two strangers make love, without their knowledge or consent. It was like I was stealing a piece of their lives, like I was making their love mine, and taking it from them. That feeling of power was more enticing than the golden young bodies moving together in my window.

Other times, when the lover didn't come, I saw her touch herself, sliding her long manicured fingers, so different from Kristen's rough paint-stained ones, down into the silken shadows of her thighs.

I took to staying longer and longer, sometimes just waiting after she'd gone to bed, on the off chance that she might wake again, turn the lights on as she crossed to the bathroom or kitchen for some late-night need.

Even when I did lie flat in my own bed I couldn't sleep. I'd lie awake for hours in the hot night air, twisting under my sheets and imagining her, her kisses, her hands, her golden thighs opening for me.

I lost interest in work, in food, in friends. After a time I even started to lose interest in Kristen. I didn't talk to her over meals, just nodded distractedly, and felt impatient when she wanted to show me a new painting, or stay up late making love.

One night she pulled me to bed with her, and I couldn't get it up. Not for her. Not for anything she did or said, not for any of her caresses or kisses or seductive smiles. Finally she went to sleep, frustrated and angry and trying hard to hide it. I listened to her breathe until I was sure she was out, then escaped to the clammy tiles of the bathroom floor, where I masturbated furiously to the remembered sight of Jill.

That's right. I'd given her a name by then, developed a person to go with the ripe body, honey hair, and graceful walk. Developed a life lived outside those naked hours in an attic room that I played illicit witness to.

In my fantasy world she was the perfect good girl with a twist. A grade-B movie concept, that was the star of all my dreams. I made her a college student, forced to work nights as an exotic dancer to pay for school. I pictured her bright, bubbly, sociable, as popular as a cheerleader, but walking a step closer to the wrong side of the tracks. I named her Jill Pierce. You can see how far gone I was, imagining a last name for her. I used to sit and think about her saying it while I was at work. I'd twirl a pencil in my hand, putting off some critical phone call while in my mind I heard her say it, Jill Pierce, over and over in the sweet sugar and butter voice I'd imagined for her.

Jill, I moaned that once, during one of the brief sexual encounters Kristen and I actually had. She didn't say a word, but I felt her stiffen under me, and I knew she'd heard.

I kept going back. I grew sick and moody from the lack of sleep. I didn't want to eat. And I kept going back. I couldn't stay away. I was a junky, fixing on her golden hair and skin, on the fading smile in her eyes.

Fading smile. She was losing it, the glow that first drew me to her. Her perfect curves were giving way to angles and planes of bone as I watched. More and more often the room was dark and quiet. Her lover never came around now. The laughing girl friends were gone, their voices faded from the walls. She was always alone.

I hardly noticed as her glow turned to shadow, her body grew gaunt and her eyes darkened. Maybe I was delirious enough to think it made her more alluring. Maybe my mental image of perfection was so firmly fixed that even the sight of her fading flesh couldn't shake it. Maybe I was too busy with my own problems to notice the changing details in my windowsill addiction.

I was on leave from work. Two weeks, paid time. Technically a vacation, but one I hadn't had much choice about taking. My boss had "strongly urged" that I take some time out. Said he was really concerned about me, personally. He probably was, but I knew that if this "time out" didn't help me shape up, his deep personal concern would change to deep personal regret when he fired me.

So I was on leave, with nothing to do but spend my days half-drunk and depressed, sitting around in my underwear waiting for Kristen to finish in her studio, and watching reruns. Reruns on the box of bad seventies sitcoms, and reruns in my mind of all the forbidden stolen moments with my attic window girl.

Into the second week of this pathetic vacation, Kristen poked her head into the den early, around noon, flooding the place with unwelcome clean sunlight. I looked up from my funk, scowling at the glare streaking my TV screen, the interruption breaking up my memory.

"Good-bye, Kevin," she said, and her words carried a weight too heavy for some sudden mid-day rush out to an art dealer's, or over to a friend's studio. This was a big good-bye, maybe the big good-bye, and definitely something worth getting off the couch for.

She was already gone from the doorway, and I followed her trail of sunlight and paint smudges into the kitchen, where she was standing amid a random heap of unused canvases, worn suitcases, stuffed garbage bags (the gray kind people use for moving), and an assortment of labeled shoe boxes.

She turned to face me as I entered the room, squaring off with both fists planted on her narrow hips, her feet set firmly apart on the yellowed kitchen tiles.

"I'm leaving you," she said, just like that, with no prelude, as if the boxes and bags hadn't already tipped me off.

"I'm sorry, Kevin, but I just can't live like this anymore. I know all about the other woman. The one you're fucking instead of me. You can't hide..."

At this point I started to laugh. A deep deadly laugh, rising in my throat like bile, and spreading uncontrollably, just falling out of me. I hadn't meant to laugh. I was going to console her, beg her to stay, promise to change. But then that shit about the other woman. She thought I was having an actual affair. Really giving her up for another real, warm, flesh and blood, wet cunt woman. And I couldn't do anything but laugh, because the truth was just as bad, only much, much more pathetic.

So I stood in our sunny kitchen laughing like a maniac while Kristen finished leaving me. While she told me where she was staying, with a gay sculptor friend of hers named Jean, who, she snapped, “gets harder for me than you do.” Sad thing is it was probably true. She left the number on the counter and me laughing like a fool, while two of her burnout art school friends helped her load the bags and boxes and canvas frames into the back of her rusty station wagon.

It was a few hours and a six-pack later before I really started to think that she’d left me. It was an hour past dark before I believed she wasn’t coming back that night, wasn’t going to crawl into our bed and lie curled beside me, just like every other night. Even when I allowed myself to believe that she was really spending the night sacked out on some eco-friendly futon in a trendy apartment, I didn’t know what to do.

I sat most of the night at the kitchen table, holding a beer in my hand that I wasn’t really drinking. I just sat there, not even knowing what to think. I wasn’t at all surprised that she’d left me. I’d become depressed, moody, a slob. It was over a month since we’d had sex, and I was in danger of losing my job.

I figured she’d probably met some trendy cafe-type grad student who understood the real metaphysical bullshit that drove her paintbrushes, and just hadn’t bothered to mention him to me. I hoped he made her happy. I hoped he made her come. I even raised a beer can toast to the two of them, sitting alone in my dark kitchen.

Then I remembered her screaming about the other woman. Oh yes. There was another woman all right. If only Kristen knew. Maybe someday I’d introduce her. Wouldn’t that be great, take my estranged wife up those wooden steps to meet the other woman in my life, that silent moving image of adolescent fantasy that I’d somehow gotten hooked on?

I sat at the table a few more hours, getting steadily drunker and thinking crazy useless thoughts, until I finally dragged myself up to bed. It was the first night in weeks that I hadn’t gone to the attic in search of my fantasy girl.

But I was right back there the next night. And every night after that. I dragged a dirty sleeping bag out of Kristen’s camping stuff and took to just

sleeping up there, where I could be near her all night. Nearer at last.

She’d begun spending a lot of time near the window, standing fine and nude, looking out. Sometimes it seemed she was just musing, other times I thought she was looking for something in her thin slice of the city night. Once in a while I even imagined she saw me, standing erect and nude in my own window watching her. The feeling always gave me a weird thrill; to think I might be discovered. It made the watching that much sweeter.

I’d never gone back to work. With Kristen gone I just dropped into a funk where it didn’t seem worth the effort. Nothing really did, except the moments with the girl.

It was those moments that I lived for, while the rest of my life broke down and disintegrated around me, unnoticed, since it didn’t directly touch my watching. The phone rang a lot at first, but I just threw it away. Overdue notices started to come in the mail, so I stopped reading it. I stopped eating really, slept all day, and most of the evening, just waking up for those few hours when she might appear at her window.

She was there almost every night now, gazing out. Nearly always naked. I forgot the world outside of her, lived for the sight of her white angled body appearing in the windowpane.

Then one night, late last week, she came to the window as usual, stood like always staring out. I knelt by the windowpane, worshipping at the profane altar of my cum-stained windowsill, watching her white body in the dim light of her room.

She made some motion, tight furtive gestures at about waist level, things I couldn’t really see. Then suddenly, taking me completely by shock, the window flung open and it seemed like she was reaching out to me, floating across the alley to come at last into my arms. It was the perfect climax, every dream come true, the ultimate result of all those sticky sleepless nights. I didn’t even touch myself, just came hard and grasping against the attic window. Came like I’d never come before, and at the same moment a piece of my mind woke up, shook itself free of the fantasies, and saw the moment for what it really was. Saw this sad young woman fall to her death with no more farewell than a voyeur’s cooling semen dripping from a smooth pane of glass.

I watched her land, saw her die at the bottom of the alley, her perfect face and figure broken on the rough concrete, her lovely hair matted with blood and rain.

And I flopped back onto my sleeping bag, my body reeling from the orgasm while my mind quivered at the raw sight of death. I didn't move again that night, not even to call the police.

In fact I haven't moved much at all since that night, that moment when I saw my angel leap toward my window, toward my arms, when I could have reached out and touched her soft skin, but instead sat helpless on the wrong side of a window and watched her die.

When the police came around asking questions, I didn't answer the door. When Kristen came by with the divorce papers, I hid upstairs. She didn't think to check there.

Then this morning I went to the funeral. Just stood outside, watching from a distance a gathering of sad strangers all in black, mourning a girl I had never known. I wondered who she had really been, and what had made her jump. I wondered if I could have changed things, if I'd cared enough to find out who she was before she was lying dead and broken in the alley that kept us apart.

I came home and drank the questions off my mind, then came back here to the attic. I'm still waiting for her to show. I know she won't but that's all I've got left, just this anonymous fantasy who appears in my window. So I still wait for her.

Maybe what I'm really waiting for is the courage to follow her down.

Sierra Black



Kevin Bacon

Crows Cry

The sky is covered with a black sheet
It's after dusk
What can this be
Screams and cries echo so deafening
Crows without homes
Destruction in force
Buildings standing boarded up or not for years
Homes to these crows and others at night
Now are empty lots
Crows flying together after dusk
Sit on a tree top limb
Cold and distraught
Screams and cries will continue on
Till empty lots once again become their homes

Robin L. Tremblay

Dwell not in Darkness

Love, Hate
Despair, Frustrate.
What can I do?
Who can I talk to?
Kill, Rebirth,
The hatred unearthed.
Where can I go?
Do you know?
What it's like?
Like a Spike.
Driving, driving,
My heart, dividing.
Will it end?
There is no end
Love, Hate.
Open the Gate.
Despair, Frustrate.
Open the Gate?
Let out the flood,
Of your life's blood.
Let the hate flow,
Let the Love grow.
Dwell not in Darkness.

Stacy Ross

Staff:

Sierra Black
Melissa Fortna
Norman A. Lee
Richard Mora

Faculty Advisors:

Cathy Sanderson
Laurel Obert
Ginger Hurajt

Northern Essex Community College



Norman A. Lee

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Northern Essex Community College
Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830